**Introduction to Poetry**

**Characteristics of Poems**

\*Concise - They are usually shorter than prose, so words must be carefully chosen and used.

\*Express strong thoughts or emotions

\*Are not bound by regular conventions of writing - Punctuation, capitalization, indentation, sentence structure, etc.

\*Some types of poems have rules of structure - sonnet, limerick, ballad, etc.

\*A "paragraph" in a poem is called a "stanza".

\*Often rely on figurative language to communicate thoughts and emotions - Figurative language is the contrast to literal language.

\*Often make use of rhythm and rhyme.

# Understanding Poetry

**Read Slowly**. Drift with the flow of the poet’s pace.

**Read Aloud.** Let the poet speak to you with the inflection and tone of your own voice. Listen to yourself.

**Read Kindly.** Try to get the words to rhyme, the meter to beat and the emotions to emerge. Read in the way you would like that poet to read your work.

**Read with an Open Mind.** If you feel inclined to disagree with the poet, remember that you have to understand exactly what you disagree with in order to refute it. Don’t “paddle upstream” trying to get the poet to say what you would say or the way you would say it. Remember that this poem has already been written. You can’t change it. If you disagree with it write your own poem. Remember that you can appreciate the expression even when you disagree with the thought.

**Reread, Several Times.** Be patient.

# LITERARY DEVICES and FIGURES OF SPEECH

**Alliteration** - the repetition of an initial (beginning) sound in a series of consecutive or neighbouring words.

EXAMPLE: The boy bounced the basketball backwards.

**Allusion** - a reference in literature to something the writer expects us to know (historical, biblical, mythological, etc.)

EXAMPLE: Was the ticking package, wrapped with ribbon and bright paper, a Trojan gift?

**Assonance** – repetition of vowel sounds usually accompanied by unlike consonant sounds

EXAMPLE: Sounding like an overtone, from some lonely world unknown.

**Euphemism** - a term substituted for one which may be harsh or offensive, to make it less harsh. EXAMPLE: Passed away – died

**Hyperbole** – an extreme or clearly intended exaggeration; a conscious overstatement to create a desired effect.

EXAMPLE: His mind was a million miles away

**Imagery** - the use of descriptive, picture-making words to create mental pictures. - Visual – seeing, Auditory – hearing, Gustatory – taste, Olfactory – smell, Tactile – touch, Kinesthetic – sensation of movement, balance or muscular tension

**Irony** – a mode of expression in which the intended meaning is the opposite of what is stated, often implying ridicule or light sarcasm; when what happens is opposite to what is expected. EXAMPLE: Do not weep maiden, as war is kind.

**Metaphor** - A direct comparison of two things without the use of “like” or “as”.

EXAMPLE: Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player, That struts and frets his hour upon the stage.

**Onomatopoeia** - a word that imitates a sound and suggests meaning. EXAMPLE: Bang, Pow, Swoosh EXAMPLE: The car hissed by on the wet street.

**Oxymoron –** a term consisting of contradictory elements juxtaposed to create a paradoxical effect. EXAMPLE: loud silence, jumbo shrimp

**Personification** – when concrete objects such as things, places or animals take on human characteristics -- attributes of form, character, feelings, behavior, and so on. Ideas and abstractions can also be personified. EXAMPLE: The wind whistled outside my door. OR The city was asleep as they drove through the dark streets.

**Pun –** A humourous play on words, using similar sounding or identical words to suggest different meanings. EXAMPLE: I just fille dup my car with gas – that’s what I call being tankful!

**Repetition -** duplication of words, lines, or stanzas to achieve an effect. EXAMPLE: Somewhere ages and ages hence.

**Satire –** A style used to poke fun at, attack or ridicule an idea, vice, or foible, often for the purpose of inducing change

**Simile -** a direct comparison between two unlike things using "like" or "as". EXAMPLE: She ran like the wind.

**Symbol** – a person, place or thing used to represent a greater truth. EXAMPLE: Dove – peace